

**Area Administrator/Program Directors
January 16-17, 2008**

**Lincoln State Office Building
301 Centennial Mall South
6th Floor, VR Conference Room
Lincoln NE**

Wednesday, January 16, 2008

1. Report on ATP/VR Process Issues

Mark Schultz

Mark reported the number of referrals this year more than doubled from last year. Cathy Hayes visited each of the VR offices last year which has resulted in much better understanding of the process and also better communication between VR and ATP. Timeliness is still an area of concern. In Omaha it has been a problem and Mark is working on the issue.

Communication and getting all the information to the right people is still a concern. Some include VR accounting staff knowing when it's okay to pay bills, getting copies of authorizations to ATP, getting the work inspected, etc. Decided that Cathy Callaway will conference call with one accounting person from each team to come up with a process for how to deal with setting up providers, authorizations, and bill paying with ATP. Ideas suggested were: revisiting the proposal that ATP does all the authorizing, or have one person statewide do all the authorizing for ATP projects.

Agrability involvement has also complicated the process and King will develop something to send out to staff so we can be consistent working with ATP and Agrability.

Ergonomic assessments on VR staff by ATP. We have a requirement that new staff receive an office assessment by ATP and it has led to some confusion about how worksites get changed. One person receives a new chair and then each person in the office says they need one. If staff are having physical issues with their office set up then a referral to ATP will be made. If a previous accommodation was made based on a doctors recommendation and the accommodation broke replacement can be made without another doctor recommendation.

2. Transition-Recommendations & Updates

Jack

- 504 Student
- Re-evaluations and Borderline Students
- Transition Data (see Jack's 12/08 email)
- Youth Leadership Council

Youth Leadership Council Update: at the Board meeting last week approval was received to hire a facilitator. We will be advertising for this position which will require a bachelor's degree. Hope to have four regional councils and possibly a state council. The position will be jointly funded by VR and Sped.

Transition Employment Outcomes recommendation: eliminate TR outcomes. Want to get a commitment from a TR student at the end of the junior year or early senior year and take an application for the Employment Program. Those who don't commit then we don't have to terminate immediately, we can keep them open as some may change their mind. However, we wouldn't be providing services to them. We need to get the parents involved earlier and actual commitment to working with VR. We have decided to adopt this proposal. We are not changing our commitment to Transition and TR staff in the schools but shifts our focus to providing services to students who we know will be moving to the Employment program. This will not go into effect until next FY.

Issues to be determined: what services won't be available in TR until they move to the Employment Program? The Transition Roundtable this year will have to address some of these issues and others that come up.

504 Students: students who test out of sped are often being made 504 students. Our policy has been if a student tested out of Sped but have other issues that would impede employment we would serve them. However, now in light of RSA's guidance that can't use borderline MR we will no longer be able to continue serving students who test out of Sped even if they have other issues if those other issues wouldn't constitute an impairment as required by RSA.

We have been working with students in TR who would not be eligible for the Employment Program and the recommendation is that we will no longer to do this. We wouldn't have to terminate them from TR immediately but they need to understand we won't be able to work with them after this school year (regardless of whether they will be graduating or not). Students in TR who have tested out this school year will not be brought into the Employment Program.

These changes to the Transition Program were agreed to. Jack will contact the TR committee to inform them of these changes.

3. Attendees for Future Field Administrators Meetings

Frank/Margy

There are two meetings each year, usually in June and December. Don always attends and offers it to other Program Directors and AA's. If interested let Don know, June 3-4 is next meeting.

4. Pay Stubs and Benefits in NIS

Margy

Beginning in January staff are responsible for making sure they have a pay stub and the benefits they have are being taken out. Staff must be responsible for this as the state will no longer be helping to assure that pay stubs are correct.

5. Reports on StrengthsFinders Training

Janet

- What is it?
- How was it?
- How did it go?
- Survey staff using StrengthsFinders Questions

Margy and Frank asked Janet and two emerging leaders to attend the StrengthsFinders training offered by State Personnel with the idea that emerging leaders would receive this training. The training consists of reading one of two books, taking an on-line assessment that is only available via the book. Almost all the emerging leaders have had the training with two groups held later in January (rescheduled because of weather). The emerging leaders are being asked if they feel it would be beneficial for all teams to receive this training. During the training they talk about their strengths and how these strengths impact their jobs.

6. Abilities Fund (1/17/2008,11:00 a.m.)

Patti Lind

Chris was unable to attend. 18 business starts since July 1. Referrals are getting better, still a number of consumers on hold because of medical condition, receiving training, etc. Consumers on hold are being re-contacted every 30 days to determine when they are ready. Consumers now have 30 days to complete the questionnaire once they have been referred to the Abilities Fund. They do as many as possible in person rather than over the phone.

An administrative assistant has been hired to work with Christine Hess in their Plattsmouth office. An individual from the Centerville staff (Claudia) is now handling the follow up process to see how their business is going and if they have the necessary supports to be successful and she provides us with business updates including financial information.

Don and Janet developed a self-assessment for staff to use with consumers that will now be sent along with the referral to the Abilities Fund.

This spring 3 workshops on financial planning and accounting practices that consumers who we have supported in small businesses can attend. Consumers from previous years could also attend these workshops. Locations have not been determined yet.

Are we at a place where we would write up some success stories for a self employment publication? Don will look at this.

7. Program Manual Chapters

Pat

- Terminations
- Ineligible and No Longer Eligible
- Client Appeal

Terminations: providing definitions to the types of termination choices. Also included a copy of the 15 day letter. Sending the 15 day letter is not mandatory but it's sent based on the circumstances of the consumers failure to keep in touch. You don't have to send the 15 day letter more than once if the time is reasonable. However you do have to inform the consumer that we are closing the case. No changes were suggested to any of the chapters discussed.

8. Client Confidentiality Review

Dan

Decided first initial, last name and last 4 digits of SSN (at the max) if needed for e-mail internally and externally. Work with our providers that we have agreements with to determine

what information must be included. Meeting Maker, full name of consumer and phone number. We have to recognize that providers, schools, etc. use e-mail and other electronic transmissions to communicate with us and we may have to handle those situations differently.

We may add something to our information release about using electronic communication so that consumers know we communicate with computers.

AA's will talk with their staff about this topic. Send in examples of electronic communication we have with consumers, providers, schools, etc. to Pat. Pat and Dan will look at these and provide more guidance on our policy.

Changed our practice on acceptable use monitoring. Frank and Dan will select one person from each team to review their use of e-mail and web surfing each time they meet (will review approximately 10 staff each meeting). If the staff person is found to be in violation of our acceptable use policy they will receive a letter telling them to stop the improper use. The letter will include what was considered inappropriate and also be sent to the Office Director and Area Administrator. Follow up monitoring of that individual will also be done.

9. Sex Offender Policy

Roger, Jean Bullen, Dave Hauswald, John Bulin

The Lincoln office is seeing a lot of level 3 sex offenders and have concerns about working with them in our office. Level 3 means they are at risk of re-offending. These individuals have been able to get jobs but they aren't able to keep them for various reasons, some reasons not having to do with their level 3 sex offender status.

Re-examine the sex offender policy and strongly consider drawing a line at the level 3 and not serve them. We may not be able to legally say this, send this policy to the Feds to see if we can do this. Judy and Jim will work with Scott on revising the Sex Offender Policy.

10. Employment Outcomes @ Geneva Correctional Program

Cheryl

Joni developing correctional programs statewide, and looking for a replacement for her JJS position. Her JJS position has always been co-located with other JJS offices which she feels has always been the key to her success. Arvin and Joni are working on a cooperative agreement with Adult Drug Court because the Drug Court has seen the success that Jen Papproth has had with the Specialized Substance Abuse System. Mark Mason is implementing the same program as the JJS program in Omaha in Lincoln. The JSO in Lincoln wasn't used to working with someone from VR and so Joni and Mark have had several meetings in order to get this going and his caseload is building.

Joni has been working with Judy on a program with Geneva YRTC. Geneva is willing to do something different with employment opportunities and has asked for our help. Working with the employers in Geneva (about 5 employers) and possibly 5 more. The girls in Geneva are there for 7-9 months. The question is after we work with them and they get a job in Geneva would we be able to take a successful outcome knowing that they would transition back to their home community? If we take a successful outcome the consumer would be in EW

Monitoring and they will need the follow up that would come from the office in or close to their hometown.

11. Specializations on Team

Frank/Margy

- Roundtable Discussion

Transition roundtable date is set for June 26. Placement people are also planning one. If there are other groups with like interests that would like to have a roundtable that would be fine. The intent would not be that staff go to more than one roundtable, they would have to choose one to attend. Not every office has all the specializations on the teams. We could look at roundtables around different processes instead. Each team has to determine how all the core services are covered by VR staff. Another idea is for the teams to determine which members of their team will attend each of the roundtables so there will be representation from each team at each of the roundtables.

12. On-Line Classes

Frank/Margy

Southeast Community College has begun offering classes that are part classroom and part on-line. The issue was raised regarding paying for computer software and internet access for on-line classes. Would we pay if unmet need wouldn't be exceeded, is the software part of the VR Allowance? Do we routinely pay for internet access? Issues we need to discuss with consumers who choose to do on-line classes include can they use the computers at school to do the on-line portion? Do they already have internet access, what software is required? Software may be available from the school at a reduced rate. At one time you could sign up for reduced cost internet service if you were a student. We would need to have consumers check with their school and internet providers to see if this is possible.

The computer software could be considered Occupational Tools if the software is something that will be required for the career they are working towards. Otherwise software is considered part of the VR allowance. AA's will talk to their staff to see what they are doing regarding the issue of paying for internet for the consumers who are taking on-line classes. We may develop a set of questions staff can use when discussing on-line classes with consumers.

13. Follow-up on Program Team Case Reviews

Janet

Scheduled the teams where the AA is also the Office Director for case reviews first. Four out of the six have been done. Have received some positive and negative comments. One issue was being able to hear on both ends during the end of the day conference call. Our conference room is pretty large and so staff there need to set closer to the conference phone. Appreciated the feedback on the cases. We had hoped that the termination review would help us figure out why our termination rate is so high but what it has turned into is a compliance review. Not seeing any patterns because we are not seeing enough cases by any one specialist.

14. Report on Area Production

Area Administrator

Hold for next time

15. Goal Alignment Process

Frank

Frank shared a draft of a goal alignment process that he and Margy developed for us to review and comment on. Developing this was as a result of the ASQ training that several of us went through the first week in December.

16. Current Consumer Satisfaction Survey's

- Employment Discussion
- Job Planning Discussion
- Job Search Strategy

Larry's team is the only one piloting the Job Planning Discussion Survey. The Job Planning process can take several months. As a result waiting until the process is completed to do the survey is awkward as consumers don't remember what happened at the beginning.

Judy reported that they have developed the questions for the Job Search Strategy and suggest piloting it in a couple of teams.

Employment Discussion survey: Judy said it's getting staff to remember to have consumers do the survey right after the discussion otherwise staff forget to have them do it. Bernie had issues with having a computer in an area that wasn't being used for other means – coordination problem that they have worked out. Bernie said his specialists feel awkward setting up the consumer with the survey and would prefer having the associates do it. Gordon says they haven't had many done as their referrals are down, their associates set the consumers up with the survey. Arvin said they haven't had any problems, specialists set the consumer up with the survey.

17. EW Outsource Monitoring

Pat

Have asked for a proposal from Easter Seals to do all of our Easter Seals monitoring, It would be one or two full time people out of their Lincoln Easter Seals office. It would be a person with a disability.

Last Sept each team received a list of old EW monitoring cases that need to be updated and closed. There has been lots of progress in getting these cases closed but there are still many to be closed. Any questions call Pat or King.

18. Social Security Electronic files

Gordon

Specialist went to local social security office for medical records. They said they didn't have any hard copies of medical records but for \$10 we could get a CD with the medical records. They said the consumer could get a copy of the records for free. Do we want to pay for the CD? King will contact our Social Security rep to see what's going on. Social Security has gone paperless. If the consumer is receiving SSI or SSDI and has a ticket they provide the information for free. If they have been denied then we have to pay.

19. Information Item: SRC is sponsoring senator luncheon, March 23 at the capitol.